

floor knows that, if we pursued that policy, it would be damaging to America, to the military, as was just brought up, and to our Nation. Every Republican leader has said that not increasing the debt limit is an alternative that ought to be pursued. Yet, we have this vote. That resolution has already been rejected by the Senate, and it stands no chance of surviving a Presidential veto. It is, frankly, simply political cover and a waste of our time.

The keys to any budget solution, Mr. Speaker, must be compromise and a seriousness of purpose. Americans want to see that seriousness, and they want to see much, much, much less of the political gamesmanship, some of which we will practice today, unfortunately.

Republicans and Democrats, I believe, in looking beyond a small fix and toward negotiating a long-term solution, will find that we actually agree on many things. We agree that gradual reforms are better than sudden ones. We agree that sequestration is not a sensible approach to achieving deficit savings.

Let me say as an aside: no matter how many times it is said on this floor that the sequester is President Obama's policy, it will not make it fact. It is dead, flat wrong.

The sequester is incorporated in the Republican budget that was passed in this House just some months ago. No Democrat voted for that budget, because they believed the sequester—as the previous speaker said, but he voted for the budget which implemented the sequester—is harming our national security and harming our economy and harming the growth of jobs.

In fact, sequestration—which I point out to people starts with “s,” which stands for “stupid”—is a terrible approach that was never meant to come into practice. Many of us all agree that, in replacing the sequester, we will need to find savings through revenue policies and reforms to mandatory spending that could pay dividends for the budget and the economy in the future.

The key to compromise, of course, is balance. Every American understands that. Every husband, every wife, every parent understands that compromise is essential within a family, within a business, within a community, and, yes, within a country. The key to compromise is balance, which is what both the Domenici-Rivlin and Bowles-Simpson bipartisan commissions embraced as a framework for agreement.

A balanced compromise is critical because Democrats and Republicans are going to have to work together to pass any agreement through both Chambers and have it signed into law. Democrats are ready to make the tough decisions necessary to set our fiscal house in order, but we have made it clear that we will not allow the most vulnerable Americans to carry the burden of deficit reduction, and it is not necessary that they do so.

Our goal remains a balanced approach to deficit reduction and an agreement that restores certainty to our economy. My Republican colleagues and friends said much about restoring certainty, particularly in the 2010 election. Unfortunately, for our economy, for our businesses, for our people, we have done anything but restore certainty. In fact, we have governed by crisis—30 days, 90 days, 180 days, a year. Arbitrary deadlines were put in place, which brought the country to the brink of default and to the brink of closing down government. In fact, of course, just recently, we did, in fact, shut down the government.

Now, my Republican colleagues say we wanted that to happen on our side of the aisle. Ironically, 198 Democrats voted to open the government. That is to say, every Democrat who was voting on this floor voted to open government. Of my colleagues who say they didn't want to shut down government, 144 of them voted to keep the government shut down, Mr. Speaker, and 87 of them voted to open up the government.

So the American public is not fooled as to who wanted to shut down government, but it was a bad policy, and it led to uncertainty in our economy. Reaching an agreement only for this fiscal year, in addition, will mean more left to do, more of sequester left to replace, and more confidence to instill.

I hope the conferees will take a broader view and will send us a budget worthy of this Nation, worthy of the Nation it will serve—one that reflects our priorities to grow our economy, creates jobs, gives opportunity to our people, ensures that our national security is protected and that our Nation's long-term competitiveness is enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we ought to do. That is what the American people expect us to do. That is what the American people hope we will do. Let's warrant the faith and confidence of the American people by keeping faith with them and with our country.

LOWER LEVEL OPERATIVES TO BLAME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, is the administration aware of the actions that are taking place in the administration?

A little history:

Fast and Furious:

Everyone knows the President did not know about this tactic until he heard about it through the news media.

A quote from White House Press Secretary Jay Carney.

So lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

Benghazi: 5 days after the attack, the administration still blamed it on a video. We learned later that the White House was told that this was a terrorist attack within 3 days of the attack.

So when did the President find out this was a terrorist attack?

In any event, no accountability. Video blamed. No one in the administration was held accountable, and the killers have not been brought to justice.

The Department of Justice's wiretapping of the Associated Press:

Other than press reports, we have no knowledge of any attempt by the Justice Department to seek phone records of the Associated Press.

Once again, this was from White House Press Secretary Jay Carney.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

The IRS scandal: The investigation was not a matter that should be conveyed to the President.

That was Jay Carney once again.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

ObamaCare Web site disaster: Secretary Sebelius claims the President was not aware of the Web site problems until the Web site was launched.

Once again, lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

NSA spying on foreign leaders? U.S. officials claimed the President did not know about this. The President refuses to say whether he knew or not.

But anyway, lower level operatives officially blamed.

NSA spying on Americans: The President claims he did not know the extent of the spying on Americans.

Lower level operatives blamed. No accountability.

Mr. Speaker, exactly who is running the country—lower level operatives? Has the government gone wild? Is there a shadow government operating without the knowledge of the White House? Is the President out of tune with what is taking place in his own administration or is he aware of those actions?

If the President were unaware of all of this, the White House needs to hold people accountable, to hold these lower level operatives accountable for their actions—their improper actions, their bungling, their incompetence. The White House needs to fix this out-of-control government immediately.

The White House needs to take responsibility for the actions of his administration and quit blaming others and lower level operatives. That is the White House's responsibility. After all, to quote the constitutional law professor, “The buck stops with me.”

And that's just the way it is.

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SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, last night, I was at National Airport awaiting Delta Flight 3395, 9:52 p.m.

Shortly after 10 p.m., Janis Shenwari, his wife, and two small children emerged to be greeted by Captain